

CLAIM AMENDMENTS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1-7. (Canceled)

8. (Currently amended) A method for regenerating a nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter arranged in an exhaust pipe of an internal combustion engine, said method comprising:

in a first regeneration mode, setting a constant value for an air/fuel ratio  $\lambda_M$  of an air/fuel mixture burned in the internal combustion engine when nitrogen oxide concentration in exhaust gas on an output side of the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter exceeds a predeterminable triggering threshold value, which triggers a regeneration of the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter; and

after the first regeneration mode, implementing a second regeneration mode in which a variable value is provided for the air/fuel ratio  $\lambda_M$  such that the time rate of change  $d\lambda_M/dt$  of the air/fuel ratio  $\lambda_M$  is set as a function of one of i) mass flow of the exhaust gas flowing through the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter, and ii) an internal combustion engine operating variable linked with the mass flow of the exhaust gas;

wherein rising values of the air/fuel ratio  $\lambda_M$  are assigned to a higher exhaust gas mass flow than dropping values of the air/fuel ratio  $\lambda_M$ .

9. (Previously presented) The method as claimed in Claim 8, wherein the first regeneration mode is ended after a predeterminable first period of time.

10. (Previously presented) The method as claimed in Claim 8, wherein the second regeneration mode is ended after a predeterminable second period of time.

11. (Previously presented) The method as claimed in Claim 8, further comprising:  
in a third regeneration mode, setting the time rate of change  $d\lambda_M/dt$  of the air/fuel ratio  $\lambda_M$  as a function of one of i) the mass flow of exhaust gas, and ii) an internal combustion engine operating variable linked with the mass flow of exhaust gas, and also as a function of a measured value from a lambda probe arranged in the exhaust pipe on the output side of the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter.

12. (Previously presented) The method as claimed in Claim 11, wherein the third regeneration mode is set directly after the second regeneration mode ends.

13. (Previously presented) The method as claimed in Claim 8, wherein setting of the air/fuel ratio  $\lambda_M$  is limited to a value range with a predeterminable lower limit value  $\lambda_{min}$  and a predeterminable upper limit value  $\lambda_{max}$ .

14. (Previously presented) The method as claimed in Claim 8, wherein the triggering threshold value for triggering the regeneration of the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter is predetermined and/or the time rate of change  $d\lambda_M/dt$  of the air/fuel ratio  $\lambda_M$  is set as a function of an aging factor representing the aging of the nitrogen oxide storage catalytic converter.

15. (Canceled)